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SUBJECT: SOMALIA DART SITUATION REPORT 12 - FOOD
SECURITY ASSESSMENT

REFS: A)NAIROBI 00380 B) NAIROBI 00255

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SUMMARY

1. According to the preliminary results of the UN Food and Agriculture's (FAO) Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) and the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) multi-agency post-short rains assessment, the October-December rains in Somalia were largely beneficial for pastoral areas and rain-fed agriculture. Sorghum production in Bay and Bakool regions was above average. In contrast, the maize producing regions of Shabelle, Juba Valley, Hiraan, and Gedo had a poor harvest due to flooding. Humanitarian indicators for communities along the Shabelle and Juba rivers are declining and emergency interventions are required. While FSAU and FEWS NET concluded that the impact of conflict in December and January was minimal on agriculture and livestock sectors in most of the regions, prolonged insecurity and conflict could have a greater negative impact. End Summary.

METHODOLOGY

2. On January 31, the FSAU, FEWS NET, and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners released preliminary findings from the recently concluded post-short rains assessment and analysis. From December 13 to January 10, a multi-agency assessment team conducted interviews, focus groups, crop production surveys, pastoral surveys, nutrition assessments, market price surveys, flood impact surveys, and conflict monitoring

surveys in all regions of Somalia, including areas affected by recent insecurity.

¶3. The information gathered was then checked against other data generated by the FSAU, FEWS NET, NGOs, and sentinel sites. Staff members from FSAU, FEWS NET, and nearly 40 other local and international organizations conducted the field research. NGOs and UN agencies working in food security, livelihoods, and nutrition reviewed the preliminary results in Nairobi, Kenya, and Hargeisa, Somalia. Results from this research were compared with the results from the same assessment in February 2006.

CHANGE IN NUMBER OF AFFECTED PEOPLE

¶4. A major finding of the assessment was that the total number of people in acute food and livelihood crisis and humanitarian emergency has dropped from 1.3 million people that FSAU reported in July 2006 to 590,000 people. Gedo, Lower Juba, Middle Juba, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, and Hiraa are the regions most affected by food and livelihood insecurity, according to this study. The total population in crisis is estimated to be approximately 1 million people, including 65,000 conflict-displaced people and 400,000 existing internally displaced persons (IDPs).

¶5. The field assessment was also able to confirm estimates of people displaced by flooding in Somalia. The Nairobi-based flood working group, including the FSAU, FEWS NET, and the Somali Water Information Management System (SWALIM), originally estimated that the November-December flooding displaced 454,500 people. According to results from this study, an estimated 255,000 people were actually displaced at the

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height of the flooding. Additionally, field researchers found that nearly 90 percent of those have returned home despite destruction of irrigation canals, houses, water points, and underground food stores.

CLIMATE AND CONFLICT'S IMPACT

¶6. The FSAU and FEWS NET concluded that climate had a positive impact on food production in rain-fed agriculture areas, but negatively affected livelihoods of river valley populations dependent on irrigation. According to the assessment, the recent conflict in southern and central Somalia had a minimally negative impact, but prolonged insecurity has the potential to disrupt inter-regional and cross-border trade.

¶7. From October to December 2006, most of Somalia received above average rainfall and currently has more vegetation than usual. For example, Lower Juba Region received more than 300 percent of the long-term rainfall average. Compared to the 1997 El Nino the intensity and temporal distribution of the 2006/2007 short rains were significantly less than in 1997. Most regions received 50 to 80 percent of what they received in 1997. However, the impact of the 2006/2007 flooding was similar to that of 1997 because most of the riverbanks that were damaged in 1997 have not yet been repaired and Somalia was not adequately prepared. The flooding destroyed crops, food stores, irrigation infrastructure, feeder roads, as well as contaminated water sources. Despite the flooding in riverine areas of Somalia, the rains had a beneficial impact on the availability of water and pasture for livestock and contributed to a successful harvest in the sorghum belt.

¶8. The FSAU and FEWS NET reported that conflict had some impact on food, nutrition, and livelihood

security, in some areas although it was not as great as originally feared. The conflict did briefly disrupt seasonal agricultural and pastoral activities, including flood recession planting and livestock migration. Conflict and insecurity affected cross-border trade and limited inter-regional trade and market access, compounding access problems caused by heavy rains and flooding. The January 3 closure of the Somalia-Kenya border also prevented trade flow and population movement. (REF A).

¶9. Conflict was initially concentrated along tarmac roads, such as the Kismayo-Jilib road and the Belet Weyne-Jowhar road, and did not spill over into agricultural areas. The team found no evidence that combatants had targeted agricultural or livestock resources. The team concluded that with the exception of parts of Juba Valley, the location of much of the fighting and military activity in recent months, the conflict had a greater impact on urban livelihoods than rural livelihoods (although the team did not conduct urban livelihood assessments). Finally, the assessment team concluded that insecurity and recent conflict has caused a shrinking of humanitarian space, compounding existing problems and complicating the investigation of a possible Rift Valley fever (RVF) epidemic in animals and humans. (REF B)

AGRICULTURE

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¶10. According to the assessment, the 2006/2007 short rains cereal production in Somalia is approximately 111,000 metric tons (MT), which is 262 percent of the 2005/2006 harvest and 113 percent of the average of 1995-2005 production. Maize was 21 percent of the total cereal production and sorghum was 79 percent.

¶11. Lower Juba, Lower Shabelle, Gedo, and Middle Shabelle were the four regions with poor crop production, mostly due to flooding. Bakool, Bay, and Middle Juba regions had exceptional crop production this season.

¶12. In 2006, Somalia's four harvests produced more than 272,000 MT of cereal, which is 101 percent of the post-war average and significantly higher than the total 2005 annual cereal production. Even though the harvest was good, the cereal produced represents a small percentage of Somalia's food needs, which are estimated to be more than 600,000 MT annually.

LIVESTOCK

¶13. The FSAU reports that animal body conditions have markedly improved with greater water and pasture availability. Camel, sheep, and goat holdings have improved, while cattle holdings remain stable. The assessment team recorded a significant recovery in livestock prices, which should lead to improved terms of trade for cereals.

¶14. In 2006, Somalia exported 3 million animals, representing 91 percent of the 1995-1997 average and 124 percent of the 2003-2005 average.

¶15. An unknown camel disease (REF B), which originated in Ethiopia, is now in Bay, Bakool, Hiraan, Lower and Middle Shabelle, central, northeast, and northwest regions in Somalia. The disease causes sudden animal death and affects 10 to 20 percent of the herd, but does not spread within it. The disease is not transmittable to humans. At this time, the FSAU has not issued an alert but will continue to monitor and investigate reports along with FAO's veterinary

partners.

¶16. The team also provided a projected scenario for the impact of a potential RVF outbreak on the Somali livestock sector based on current indicators. The FSAU predicts that any outbreak of RVF in Somalia in 2007 will not be as severe as the 1997 RVF outbreak and will be localized. In the short-term (1 to 2 months), the FSAU anticipates a minimal impact on the livestock economy from the closure of the Kenyan cattle market, because many livestock holders are currently attempting to restock their herds and are not selling.

NUTRITION

¶17. During the food security assessment, field teams also took mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measurements from children under the age of five to integrate nutritional data with food security data. MUAC measurements are a quick screening method that is not statistically comparable to formal nutritional surveys.

¶18. In December, field teams utilizing the MUAC method

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found that 10 to 15 percent of children under the age of five in Belet Weyne District, Hiraan Region, suffered from serious levels of malnutrition. The malnutrition rates in Belet Weyne are likely linked to waterborne diseases, such as cholera, that spread during flooding. Experts believe that further investigation of the causes of malnutrition is especially warranted in Hiraan, as the levels of malnutrition may not be a food security issue as they are elsewhere, but instead be related to water, sanitation, and hygiene problems.

¶19. Riverine settlements in Middle Juba Region are other areas of concern, according to the assessment. Throughout Middle Juba Region the high levels of acutely malnourished children are decreasing, except in riverine communities where an increase in malnutrition rates has been documented since December. According to the FSAU, the causes for the increasing levels of malnutrition in the riverine communities include localized displacement, diarrheal disease, malaria, and disrupted access to feeding centers due to flooding.

¶20. The team concluded that immediate nutritional interventions are needed in the riverine communities along the Shabelle River in Hiraan and Middle Shabelle regions as well as along the Juba River in Middle Juba and Gedo regions.

FOOD SECURITY OUTLOOK

¶21. Overall, the food security and nutrition situations have markedly improved throughout Somalia, most regions were downgraded on the integrated phase classification (IPC) scale. The FSAU created the IPC system to integrate multiple nutrition, livelihood, and agriculture indicators into a single food security risk classification system. The system classifies risk by district from generally food secure to famine and humanitarian catastrophe. The only areas that remain under a humanitarian emergency classification on the IPC are the riverine areas mentioned above and Gedo Region. Much of the improvement is due to the favorable climatic conditions from the long and short rains of 2006.

¶22. The preliminary results of the food security and livelihood assessment in Somalia are positive, but tempered by political uncertainty, insecurity, and an erratic climate. As a result, humanitarian assistance

will continue to be required in Somalia.

¶23. FEWS NET and the FSAU are staffed with talented Somali technical experts willing to travel frequently throughout Somalia. The information and analysis they provide is vital to USAID, other donors, and the humanitarian community working in Somalia.

RANNEBERGER